

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
OVERSIGHT DIVISION

FISCAL NOTE

L.R. No.: 1824S.02I
Bill No.: SB 606
Subject: County Officials; Elections
Type: Original
Date: April 6, 2025

Bill Summary: This proposal modifies provisions relating to absentee ballots.

FISCAL SUMMARY

| ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON GENERAL REVENUE FUND | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| FUND AFFECTED | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Total Estimated Net Effect on General Revenue | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |

| ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON OTHER STATE FUNDS | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| FUND AFFECTED | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Total Estimated Net Effect on <u>Other</u> State Funds | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |

Numbers within parentheses: () indicate costs or losses.

| ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON FEDERAL FUNDS | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| FUND AFFECTED | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Total Estimated Net Effect on <u>All</u> Federal Funds | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |

| ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| FUND AFFECTED | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Total Estimated Net Effect on FTE | 0 | 0 | 0 |

- ☐ Estimated Net Effect (expenditures or reduced revenues) expected to exceed \$250,000 in any of the three fiscal years after implementation of the act or at full implementation of the act.
- ☐ Estimated Net Effect (savings or increased revenues) expected to exceed \$250,000 in any of the three fiscal years after implementation of the act or at full implementation of the act.

| ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON LOCAL FUNDS | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| FUND AFFECTED | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Local Government | (Unknown) | (Unknown) | (Unknown) |

FISCAL ANALYSIS

ASSUMPTION

Sections 115.295 and 115.300 – Absentee Ballots Curing

Officials from the **Office of the Secretary of State (SOS)** assume the proposal will have no fiscal impact on their organization.

Oversight requested from the SOS the number of absentee ballots that were rejected in the 2024 General Election, **SOS** provided that 5,238 ballots were rejected.

In addition, the **SOS** stated they don't have accurate information as to the cost of returned ballot postage that the State of Missouri reimburses to the local election authorities (LEAs). LEAs can combine up to two years' worth of reimbursements in a single payment request, which also includes municipal elections where the state doesn't have a race, but they still reimburse postage.

In response to similar legislation, SB 210 (2023), the **Oversight** requested from the SOS the number of absentee ballots that were rejected in the most current elections. **SOS** provided that they receive their absentee statistics from post-election surveys. They only do these for state-level elections so cannot provide a number for municipal elections. The reporting for the primary is currently incomplete as it had to be delayed due to other more urgent projects. However, for the general election their surveying was complete and there were 3,055 ballots rejected (including military/overseas).

Oversight notes that according to the SOS the below is the total for returned ballot postage that the State of Missouri has reimbursed to the local election authorities in the past five years.

| | |
|------|------------|
| 2018 | \$ 50,000 |
| 2019 | \$ 100,484 |
| 2020 | \$ 58,709 |
| 2021 | \$ 477,017 |
| 2022 | \$ 43,052 |

Officials from the **Jackson County Board of Elections** provide each absentee voter with detailed instructions that accompanies the voter's ballot they receive via mail. Instructions include how to properly vote the ballot and instructions for properly filling out and signing the envelope. Additionally, the Board instructs the voter on the absentee envelope if there is no need for notarization otherwise the instructions are clear notarization is needed.

Election authorities are understaffed especially during large elections and are occupied fulfilling the absentee requests that come in daily. Election authorities would require additional full-time staff if a law such as SB 606 passed.

Two Fulltime Staff Members - \$84,711.00

In most cases election authorities do not have access to a voter's email address or phone number. Election authorities would have no other option but to mail a notice via 1st class mail to the voter which generally takes 7 working days. Voters submitting their ballots less than two weeks before the election would not have the benefit of getting the rejection notice in a timely manner to cure their ballot and some might receive the notice after the date for submission of corrections.

Additional Postage for Notices - \$ 3,117.00

TOTAL \$87,828.00

Officials from the **St. Louis City Board of Elections** state for the 2025 General Election approximately 200 absentee ballots were rejected as a result of errors on the ballot envelope. Estimating it would take 15 minutes to contact each voter, this would be 50 hours. If an Election Board employee being paid \$15/hour was paid to do this work, the estimated fiscal impact would be \$750.

Officials from the **St. Louis County Board of Elections** state depending on voter turnout, they see anywhere from roughly 200 to well over 1,000 absentee ballots might be rejected for lack of signature or lack of notarization per election. This legislation requires them to mail a notice to these voters. They estimate the total cost per letter, when factoring in postage, printing, and labor, to be \$1.66 per letter. For the April 2024 election, they would have spent \$280.54 on these letters. For November 2024, they would have spent \$2,177.92.

Officials from the **Johnson County Clerk** state there would likely be minimal impact (less than \$150 per election) to Johnson County in the way of additional postage cost to notify voters of missing information on their absentee ballot envelope.

Officials from the **Platte County Board of Elections** assume the proposal will have no fiscal impact on their respective organization.

Oversight notes there is a potential increase in cost to local election authorities for postage, printing and staff time to rectify absentee ballot rejections. Oversight is unable to determine how many individuals will cast an absentee ballot or how many absentee ballots will be rejected; therefore, Oversight will reflect a potential unknown cost to local election authorities.

| <u>FISCAL IMPACT – State Government</u> | FY 2026 (10 Mo.) | FY 2027 | FY 2028 |
|---|---------------------|------------|------------|
| | | | |
| | <u>\$0</u> | <u>\$0</u> | <u>\$0</u> |
| | | | |

| <u>FISCAL IMPACT – Local Government</u> | FY 2026 (10 Mo.) | FY 2027 | FY 2028 |
|---|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | | |
| LOCAL ELECTION AUTHORTIES | | | |
| | | | |
| <u>Cost</u> – postage, printing and processing absentee ballot rejections | <u>(Unknown)</u> | <u>(Unknown)</u> | <u>(Unknown)</u> |
| | | | |
| ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON LOCAL ELECTION AUTHORITIES | <u>(Unknown)</u> | <u>(Unknown)</u> | <u>(Unknown)</u> |
| | | | |

FISCAL IMPACT – Small Business

No direct fiscal impact to small businesses would be expected as a result of this proposal.

FISCAL DESCRIPTION

Under current law, if the statement on any absentee ballot envelope has not been completed, the absentee ballot is required to be rejected. Under this act, the election authority is required to notify the voter that the envelope is missing information by all means reasonably calculated to make contact with the voter. The voter must be permitted an opportunity to supply the missing information by completing a new statement and delivering it to the election authority by any means authorized by law for delivering absentee ballots. The Secretary of State is responsible for developing an affidavit form to be used for such purposes. The act expressly prohibits changing any selections made on the ballot contained within the ballot envelope.

Only the office of the election authority is permitted to contact voters pursuant to this act.

Voters have until the close of polls on election day to supply missing information on the absentee ballot envelope. If a voter fails to supply the missing information prior to that time, the absentee ballot shall be rejected.

Current law permits election authorities to prepare absentee ballots for tabulation not earlier than the fifth day prior to the election. This act repeals the five day limitation and permits preparation of absentee ballots for tabulation upon receipt.

The act repeals a provision stipulating that absentee ballots that are received by an LEA in person are deemed cast when received prior to election day and absentee ballots that are received through a common carrier are deemed cast when received prior to the closing of polls. Furthermore, the repealed provision provides that absentee ballots received by the LEA through a common carrier such as the United States Postal Service are required to be received prior to the time fixed by law for the closing of polls on election day.

This legislation is not federally mandated, would not duplicate any other program and would not require additional capital improvements or rental space.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Office of the Secretary of State
Jackson County Election Board
Platte County Board of Elections
St. Louis City Board of Elections
St. Louis County Board of Elections
Johnson County Clerk



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April 6, 2025



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